Pandemic Influenza

What is pandemic influenza?
Pandemic influenza is a global outbreak of any new flu virus that spreads easily from person-to-person and causes serious illness and death.

Is pandemic influenza the same as avian influenza (bird flu)?
A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. Avian influenza, or bird flu, could become a pandemic if it changes into a virus that spreads easily between people.

How is pandemic flu different from seasonal flu?
Seasonal flu
- follows predictable geographical patterns
- usually happens each winter
- has been seen in the community previously, so more people have immunity
- leads to fewer deaths
- can be prevented with an annual vaccination

Pandemic flu
- occurs a few times each century
- is caused by a new virus to which people have little to no immunity
- leads to more severe symptoms
- causes more deaths
- can not be prevented with a vaccination until one specific to the new strain is developed

What is the Springfield-Greene County Health Department doing to get ready for pandemic flu?
The SGCHD and its local, state and federal partners are
- maintaining a state of active awareness
- monitoring health issues regarding pandemic flu
- working to educate the public about pandemic flu
- working to strengthen their plan to dispense vaccines, anti-virals and other medical materials
- working with local media to streamline the process for releasing information in a pandemic

What can I do now to prepare my family for a potential pandemic?
Practice good hygiene. Make it a habit now. It can protect you if there is an outbreak:
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or sanitizer.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the crook of your elbow.
- Throw away tissues so other people won't come into contact with them.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth after handling contaminated items.
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
- Get an annual flu vaccination. It may offer some protection against other strains of influenza.

Do all that you can to improve your health now. Healthy bodies are more resistant to disease:
- Stop smoking.
- Improve your eating habits.
- Exercise regularly.
- Get regular medical checkups and screenings.
- Stay current on all recommended vaccinations.

Listen to a credible news source. If there is an outbreak, follow the instructions of public health authorities.